

No Better Shoulder by runs_in_the_family

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Angst with a Happy Ending, Billy Hargrove Needs Love, Bullying, First Kiss, Homophobic Language, M/M, Originally Posted on Tumblr, Thank God for Steve Harrington, Tumblr Prompt

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-07-02

Updated: 2018-07-02

Packaged: 2022-04-22 05:07:18

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,477

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

The parking lot is empty. Billy is hurting. Steve wants to help.

No Better Shoulder

Author's Note:

For the prompt: "their first kiss after admitting to each other they're attracted to one another"

The rumour was born in the girls bathroom. When enough of the school's female populace had recounted similar stories of disinterested trysts in the back of his Camaro, assumptions started being made about why Billy Hargrove was the way he was. Initially an in-joke among select girls, soon it spread. Suddenly, threads were being connected and stories surfaced of distant cousins from California who, through wholly improbable twists of fate, would somehow not only know Billy Hargrove, but would be able to confirm, without doubt, that everything was true. Eventually, the boys locker room became an echo chamber of stifled laughter and forced coughs used to mask the word "faggot".

Steve would watch him bristle at the utterance, eyes cast to the ground and shoulders bunched defensively. He'd never jump to Billy's defence. He'd never offer a sympathetic look or even the briefest moment of eye contact. Not joining in, he told himself, was enough. That was harder to believe when he'd catch sight of the tears in Billy's eyes.

When the other guys refused to shower with him, Steve thought that maybe Billy would start biting back. He'd half-hoped to watch him punch some guy's lights out or verbally strip them all down until they issued frightened apologies. Instead, Billy quit the team. Steve was the only one who didn't laugh when someone said they should hose down his old locker, in case the next guy caught something.

He'd eat his lunch alone, behind the bleachers. That was when the stories started about his predilection for sucking guys off back there after football games. Of course, no one ever mentioned who these guys were. The slightest bit of investigation would make it all too easy to disprove and, by this time, everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves far too much for the truth to potentially ruin it all.

What killed Steve more than anything was that Billy just took it.

One evening, after hours of cramming in the library, Steve left the school and found himself confronted with an unexpected night sky. Finals-induced stress had clearly warped his internal clock. Only a handful of cars remained in the parking lot and the Beemer sat almost achingly far from the building.

He set off on his trek but only made it halfway across the lot before a faint, repetitive gasping caught his attention.

Off to the left, a blue Camaro was parked under the orange glow of a parking lot spot light. The light was almost ineffectual, barely enough to illuminate the entirety of the car, but it was enough for Steve to make out the graffiti on the hood. And on the doors. And to see the broken driver's side window.

This was a new low for them.

Sitting just outside the shaft of light was a figure, on the ground, head buried in his hand, shoulders shaking. Steve was half way to the beaten-up car before he even realised he'd changed course.

To his surprise, Billy didn't try to cover up his tears when he copped Steve's arrival. Instead, he lifted his gaze just short of Steve's own and addressed him like his eyes weren't streaming.

"The fuck do you want, Harrington?"

Steve skimmed over the crudely written slurs decorating the car. He was pretty sure he recognised Tommy's work.

"Harrington!" Billy called out, louder than before.

His attention snapped back. He struggled for a moment to find anything good enough to say.

"You need some help?" He asked, weakly.

Billy's eyes fell shut. Even in the half-light, Steve could make out the dampness of his lashes and the quake in his lip.

“Yeah, what are you gonna do?” He scoffed. “How’re you gonna fix it?”

“I didn’t say I could fix it.” Steve shuffled awkwardly, wishing he knew what his plan had been when he’d started walking over. “I just...if you need a ride or –”

The laughter that erupted from Billy almost scared him. It seemed forced and manic and not dissimilar to the cackle Steve had heard that night at Jonathan’s. What was different, what made it less menacing, were the tears that continued to roll down his cheeks as he threw his head back. As it subsided, Billy opened his eyes and stared up at Steve, blue irises surrounded by a roaring red.

“Lemme guess. You’re hoping I’m so grateful that I drop down and suck that pretty boy cock of yours?” Buried beneath the tears, Billy’s signature bite worked its way through. “Believe me, Harrington, you’re not the first one to offer.”

Taken aback, Steve had no idea how to respond. Billy seemed to pick up on his shock.

“Yeah.” He nodded. “You’d be surprised how quickly guys start swarming around the school faggot when they think they can get away with it. Fucking team won’t shower with me but half the motherfuckers’ve tried to make a move on me when no one’s around.”

Billy rubbed at his eyes, tears no longer falling but still clinging stubbornly to his lashes.

“You know, I might’ve said yes to some of them.” He sniffed. “If shit was different.”

The casual delivery made Steve wonder if Billy realised what he’d just admitted to. It was, as far as Steve knew, the closest to a confirmation anyone at school had received that he was actually gay.

“I wasn’t going to...make a move.”

A small smile flickered across Billy’s face. It came and went in an instant but it caught Steve hard.

“Shame.” He said, simply.

The remark sent a small jolt down Steve’s neck.

“Why’s that?” He asked, before he could stop himself.

Another smile appeared, this one far more forced.

“Come on, Harrington.” Billy cooed. “I can tell the others to go fuck themselves but if you came asking?”

He gave him a once over.

“Pretty little brunette with those those lips.” He hissed. “Might be a little harder to say no to.”

Steve couldn’t tell whether or not Billy was fucking with him. He’d thought, given that he’d found him in what he perceived to be a moment of need, that they might manage a real, honest exchange. Whether that was even possible with Billy, Steve didn’t know. He was willing to try though.

“I’m sorry.” He said, trying not to focus on the last comment.

Billy rolled his eyes and leaned back against the car.

“What, I got you to thank for the new paint job?” He rapped a knuckle against an off-white ‘faggot’ dashed across the door.

“No, I –”

“It’s okay, Harrington.” Billy stared off into the empty car park. “I know you didn’t do it.”

“Look, I’m sorry I didn’t say anything.” Steve rubbed at the nape of his neck anxiously. “I’m sorry I didn’t stick up for you.”

Another vaguely manic laugh spilled from Billy. The humour didn’t seem to reach his eyes, though.

“You think I need you defending me?” He asked, mockingly.

Weeks of mounting anger, not only with Billy’s treatment but

with his complete lack of reaction to it, started to rise in Steve's gut.

"Well you're sure as shit not sticking up for yourself." He snapped, harsher than he'd intended.

The only response was an exhausted smile and a shake of the head.

"No point." Billy said, listlessly. "Trust me."

Steve's anger spiked again. He'd known it had been brewing, every time he'd heard another piece of gossip or watched Billy silently take another round of abuse, but he hadn't known how intense it had been until now.

"Christ, come on!" He yelled, losing himself slightly. "You don't need to take this shit, you know that, right? Most of those guys are pussies, if you just –"

"What?" Billy interjected, turning from the darkness to finally meet Steve's eye. "Beat the shit out of them? You gonna explain everything to my dad after I get suspended? Cause I don't feel like trying to convince him I didn't get gang banged by my old basketball team or whatever the fuck they're saying now. Cause I guarantee you, Harrington, that whatever he hears, whatever bullshit they're coming up with, he's gonna believe it over whatever I've got to say."

Billy bit down on his lip, trying to force back the tears returning to his eyes. The sight compelled Steve to push his anger aside.

"Trust me." Billy repeated. "Fighting it doesn't help."

The tone told him that Billy spoke from experience.

Taking a deep breath, Steve moved closer and slowly lowered himself to the ground next to Billy. They stayed in silence for a solid minute before he worked up the nerve to ask.

"When did you know? That you liked guys?"

Billy went rigid for a second. He shook himself loose fairly quickly but Steve still caught the tension.

"Few years ago, I guess." He shrugged. "Probably knew before that but...didn't *know*. Didn't get what it was. Or something."

Billy threw a glance his way.

"You?"

Steve's mouth dropped open and snapped shut several times. The reaction made Billy grin.

"Come on." He goaded. "Don't pretend you haven't had some dirty little dream about...Emilio Estevez or some shit."

Steve bit down on his cheek, begging it to stop blushing.

"God..." He laughed nervously. "I haven't..."

His ramblings halted when Billy raised one knowing eyebrow. The look somehow managed to be both smug and oddly reassuring. When he spoke again, Steve felt inexplicably relieved, safer than he had in months.

"Rob Lowe." He clarified, face burning up. "You know, uh, The Outsiders?"

Another laugh slipped past Billy's lips, this one more genuine.

"Sure." He nodded. "I get it."

"It was just once." Steve said hurriedly, suddenly regretting his decision to share. "It wasn't even...I mean, I didn't..."

"Make a mess?" Billy offered, eyes reclaiming their usual bold glint.

Both the remark and the smile with which it was delivered sent Steve's pulse racing. Suddenly, the apprehension slipped away and was replaced with something a little more assured. He felt a small rush of adrenaline start to speak for him.

"Can you blame me?" He smiled, ignoring the rapid-fire pace his heart was taking. "I mean, eyes that blue, kinda hard not to take

notice.”

He couldn't help but savour the sight of Billy Hargrove caught off guard.

“That what does it for you, huh?” Billy asked when he'd regained his composure.

Steve felt his face flush red again but made no attempt to conceal it. He smiled and shrugged and feigned nonchalance.

“Helps.” He sighed. “That and a good smile.”

“Good smile?” Billy probed, the corners of his mouth ticking upwards.

“Yeah.” Steve nodded, pretending his whole body wasn't overheating. “You know, that shit-eating grin that makes you wanna slap it right off their face?”

Billy laughed again, full and loud and wholly genuine. Steve watched his face closely, relished being able to pull that reaction from him.

“Yeah, that's it.” He said, nodding slightly.

“What?” Billy cleared his throat, the remnants of his outburst still spread across his lips.

Steve could feel his breath getting shorter.

“Good smile.”

Billy tipped his head back against the car and gave him a delighted little smirk, gaze shifting from his eyes to his lips and back. Steve felt the shiver run down his neck again.

“Look at you.” Billy murmured, any trace of upset long gone. “This what it feels like to get hit on by Steve Harrington?”

The pounding in Steve's chest vibrated through his whole body, made his fingers twitch and his voice shake.

“I don’t know, what does it feel like?”

His chest suddenly felt heavy as he watched Billy wet his lips.

“Pretty fucking good.” His eyes drifted to Steve’s lips again. “Like I said. Kinda hard to say no to.”

There was a moment, a split second between when he slipped a hand to the back of Billy’s neck and when he pulled him close enough to catch his lips, that Steve thought he saw worry in those cried-out blue eyes. It was a quick flash, coinciding with a deep intake of breath. He wondered, for that half a moment, if Billy had ever actually kissed a guy before. His mind quickly flashed through every sordid, detailed and often degrading story he’d heard flung about recently regarding Billy’s supposed escapades. And then it settled on Billy himself, sitting there, looking almost terrified at the prospect of kissing him.

“You okay?” Steve whispered, body screaming for him to swallow the inch between their lips.

There was a nod, but it did nothing to hide that glimpse of unease swimming in the blue.

Steve brushed his thumb gently at the nape of Billy’s neck for a moment before finally letting himself lean in.

It felt like arriving at a long-sought destination. Every part of him that had been running double time, his racing heart and itching fingers and the ebbing rage in his gut, had their moment of release, converging for an instant before vanishing completely. He couldn’t help but sigh into the kiss.

The relief didn’t seem to be his alone. From his grip on Billy’s neck, Steve could feel the stiffness in his shoulders slowly sink away. After a moment, a hand brushed past Steve’s cheek and buried itself in his hair, pulling him closer.

He felt almost giddy when Billy parted his lips for him and he took the opportunity to slip his hand forward, cupping Billy’s chin and urging him to open his mouth wide. Steve licked gently into his

mouth and couldn't resist chuckling slightly when it elicited a small whine.

Quick as a flash, Billy retreated, pulling back and swatting Steve's hand away.

"Whoa, what's – "

"Don't laugh at me." Billy said, bluntly.

The red in his cheeks made Steve hate himself a little bit.

"I'm not." He assured him, smile wiped from his face.

"If you're fucking with me, Harrington..." Billy shook his head. "I can't do it. Not from you."

Steve saw more pain in his eyes than than he had over the past few months. Cautiously, he moved closer and rested a hand on Billy's knee. There was a small flinch.

"I'm not fucking with you." He insisted, staring Billy dead in the eye. "I'm just...I'm happy."

Billy swallowed nervously.

"Happy?" He whispered.

Steve nodded, smile sneaking back onto his face.

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm really fucking happy. This makes me really fucking happy." He felt the red rush back to cheeks. "You getting excited makes me really fucking happy."

A small breath of laughter slipped past Billy's lips.

"Shit, play a little hard to get, Harrington." He teased, worry not yet dispelled from his eyes.

Steve shook his head.

"No way. You think you're getting rid of me after this?"

Billy bit back a shameless grin.

“Shit.” He sniffed. “Well if I’m stuck with you, guess I better make the most of it.”